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✓ Latest release

Underemployed workers

Employed people who want to work more hours or worked reduced hours, including preferred hours and usual hours not worked, and underemployment ratios.

Reference period February 2025

Released 29/07/2025

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Key statistics

In February 2025:

- 818,900 part-time workers preferred to work more hours, with almost half preferring to work full-time (46%)
- Of the 14.7 million employed people in May 2025, 1.3 million preferred (and were available) to work more hours

This Underemployed workers release contains data from both the February 2025 [Participation, Job Search and Mobility \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia/feb-2025\)](#) (PJSM) survey and the May 2025 [Labour Force Survey \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/May-2025\)](#) (LFS). The LFS provides estimates of the total number and characteristics of all underemployed people, with the PJSM survey providing information on part-time workers who prefer more hours.

Other data collected from the Participation, Job Search and Mobility survey are published in:

- [Job mobility \(/statistics/labour/jobs/job-mobility/feb-2025\)](#)
- [Potential workers \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/potential-workers/feb-2025\)](#)

Microdata from the PJSM survey for 2015 to 2025 will be released in [TableBuilder \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder\)](#) and [DataLab \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab\)](#) (as a supplementary file to

the [Longitudinal Labour Force \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/longitudinal-labour-force-australia/\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/longitudinal-labour-force-australia/) on 7 August 2025. For more information, refer to [Microdata and TableBuilder: Participation, Job Search and Mobility \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia/\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia/).

Underemployed

Comparison with underemployment measures in Labour Force, Australia

This release provides estimates of the total number of employed people who are underemployed, sourced from the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) (Expanded underutilisation, Tables 24 and 25). This comprises all employed people who either:

- had their hours reduced (e.g. they were stood down or their employer had insufficient work for them), or
- preferred, and were available, to work more hours than they usually work

In comparison, the headline underemployment estimates published in Labour Force, Australia (in Tables 22, 23 and 23a, and in the LFS media release), which are based on long-standing international standards, includes: part-time employed who would prefer, and are available for, more hours than they usually work, and full-time employed who worked part-time hours for economic reasons.

Employed people can be underemployed either because:

- they worked less than their usual hours for economic reasons (i.e. due to being 'stood down, or there was insufficient or no work available (sometimes referred to as the 'Cyclical underemployed')
- they would prefer (and are available) to work more hours than they usually work (sometimes referred to as the 'Structural underemployed').

Of the 14.7 million employed people in May 2025, 1.5 million were underemployed. Of these:

- 321,100 people had their hours reduced - 106,600 were employed full-time and 214,500 employed part-time
- 1,336,350 people preferred more hours - 528,250 were employed full-time and 808,100 employed part-time.

There were 122,300 people who were in both categories - they had their hours reduced to less than usual and also preferred to work more than their usual hours.

Diagram 1: Underemployment framework



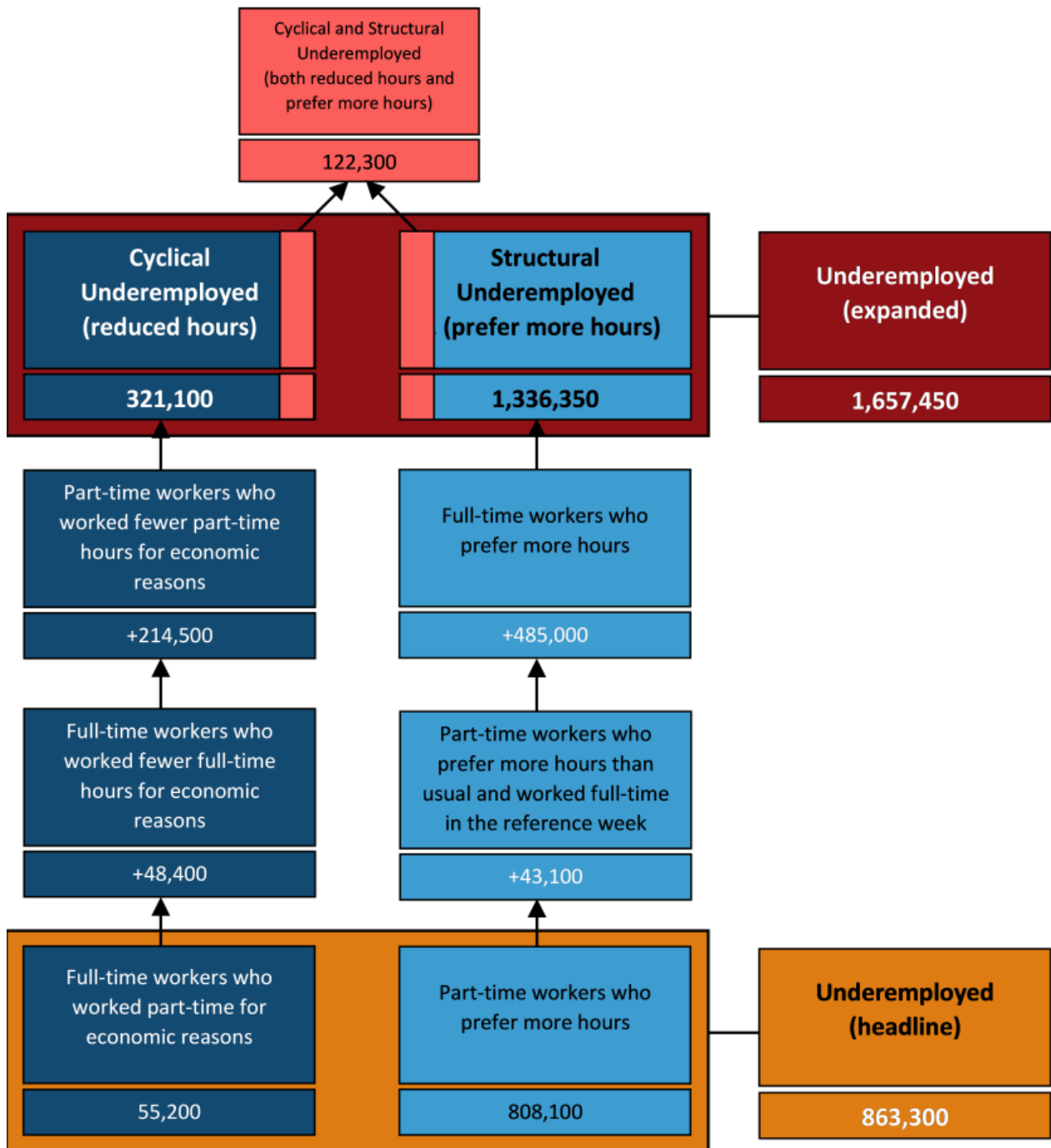
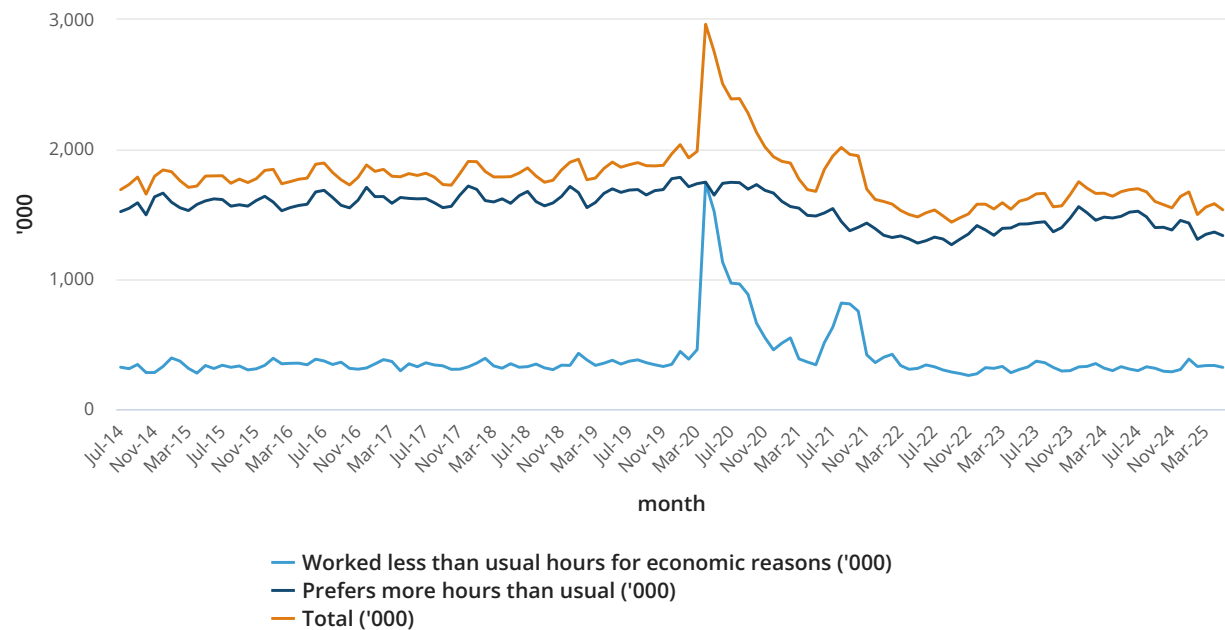


Chart 1: Underemployed workers, Original



Note: There are people who preferred more hours and also had their hours reduced, that is, they worked less hours than usual, and also prefer to work more than their usual hours - so the sum of the people who preferred more hours and people who had their hours reduced does not equal the total underemployed.

While Chart 1 shows a 'headcount measure' of underemployment (the number of people who are underemployed) an alternative way to look at underemployment is through a 'volume measure' of underemployment - the number of 'hours not worked' by underemployed people.

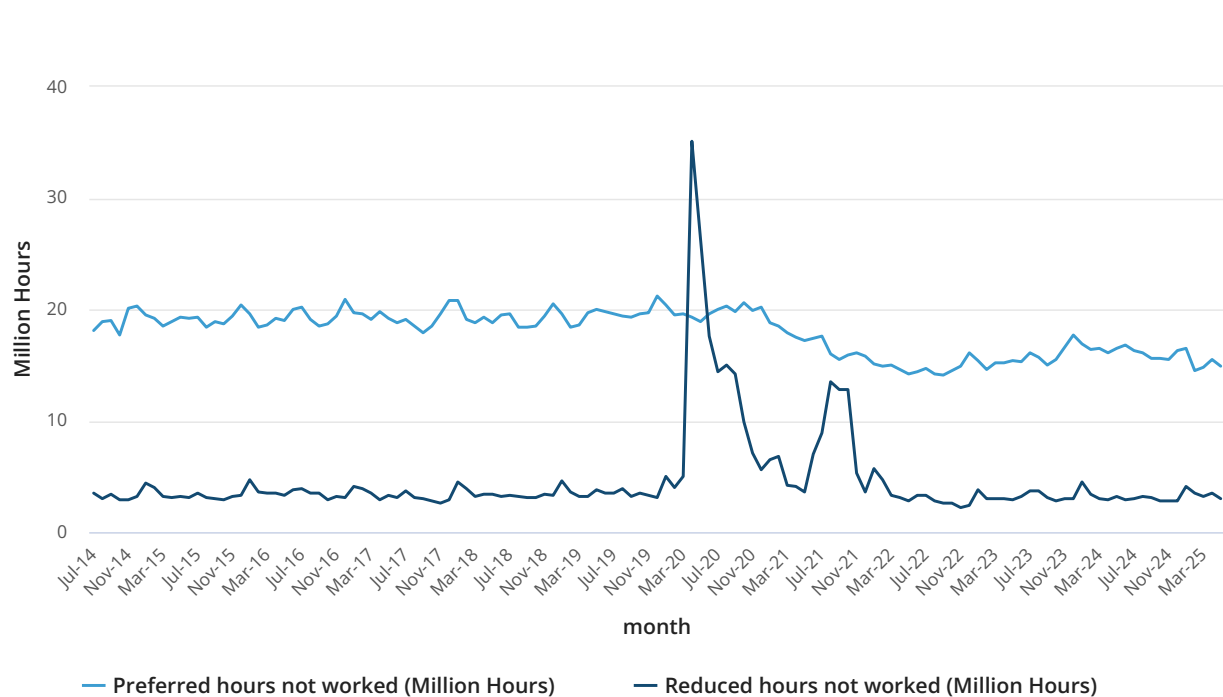
Chart 2 shows the weekly hours not worked of underemployed people. The weekly hours not worked are:

- the number of additional hours they would prefer, and are available, to work
- the difference between usual hours and the hours actually worked in the reference week, for people who worked less than their usual hours for economic reasons

In May 2025, there were 17.9 million hours not worked. Of these:

- 14.9 million hours not worked by people who preferred more hours - i.e. the additional hours preferred
- 3.0 million hours not worked by people who had their hours reduced - i.e. the usual hours not worked for economic reasons

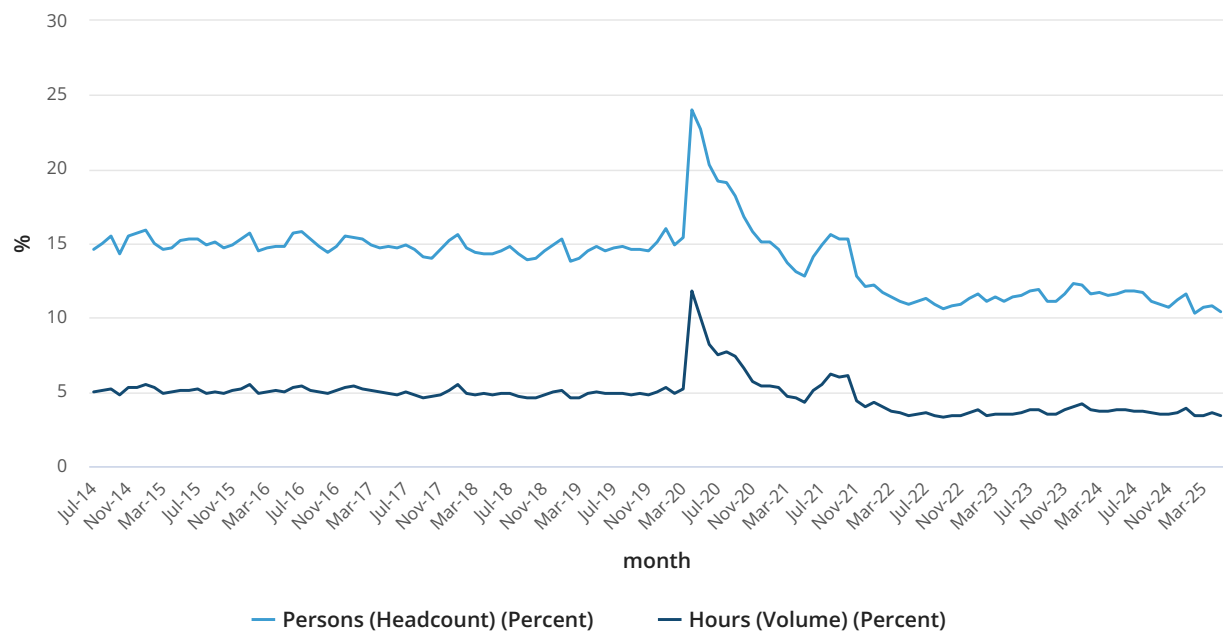
Chart 2: Weekly hours not worked, Underemployed workers, Original



Hours not worked by people who had their hours reduced is the difference between their usual hours and the hours actually worked in the reference week, and the hours not worked by people who preferred more hours is the additional hours preferred.

In May 2025, the headcount underemployment ratio was 10.4% while the hours-based underemployment ratio was considerably lower at 3.4%.

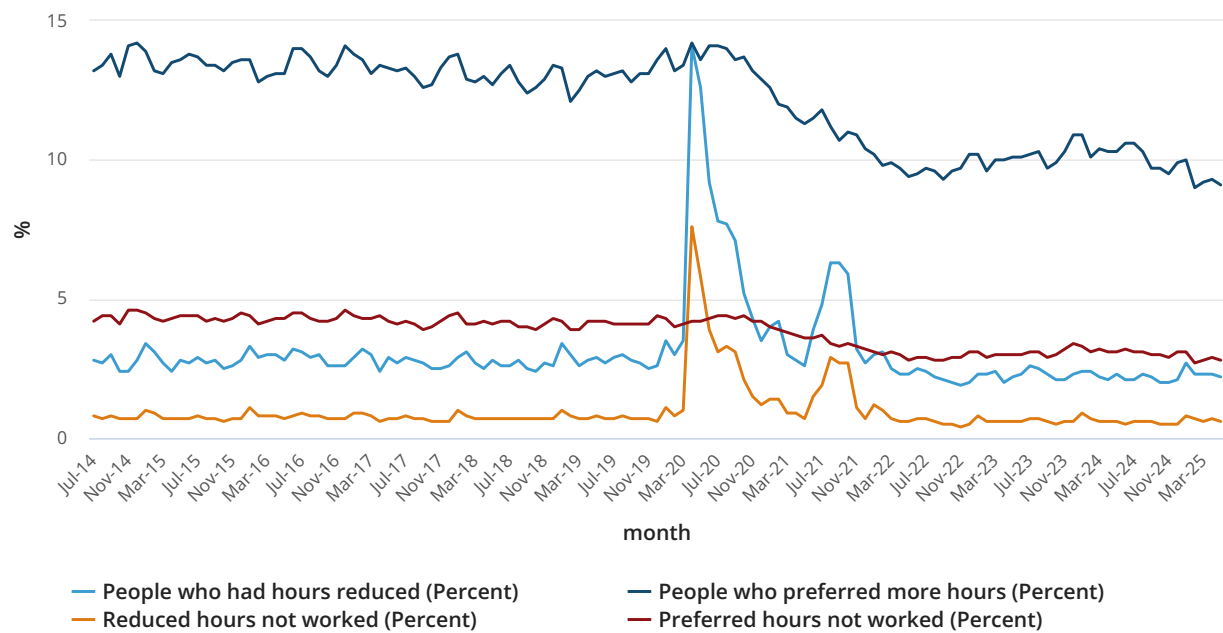
Chart 3: Underemployment ratio, Headcounts and Hours, Original



Note: The headcount underemployment ratio is the number of underemployed as a proportion of all employed. The hours-based underemployment ratio is the hours not worked as a proportion of the potential hours of employed people (i.e. the hours usually worked of all employed plus the additional hours preferred of the structurally underemployed).

Hours-based measures of underemployment are generally lower than headcount measures, as the hours-based measures account for the extent of a person's underemployment whereas a headcount measure counts all underemployed people the same.

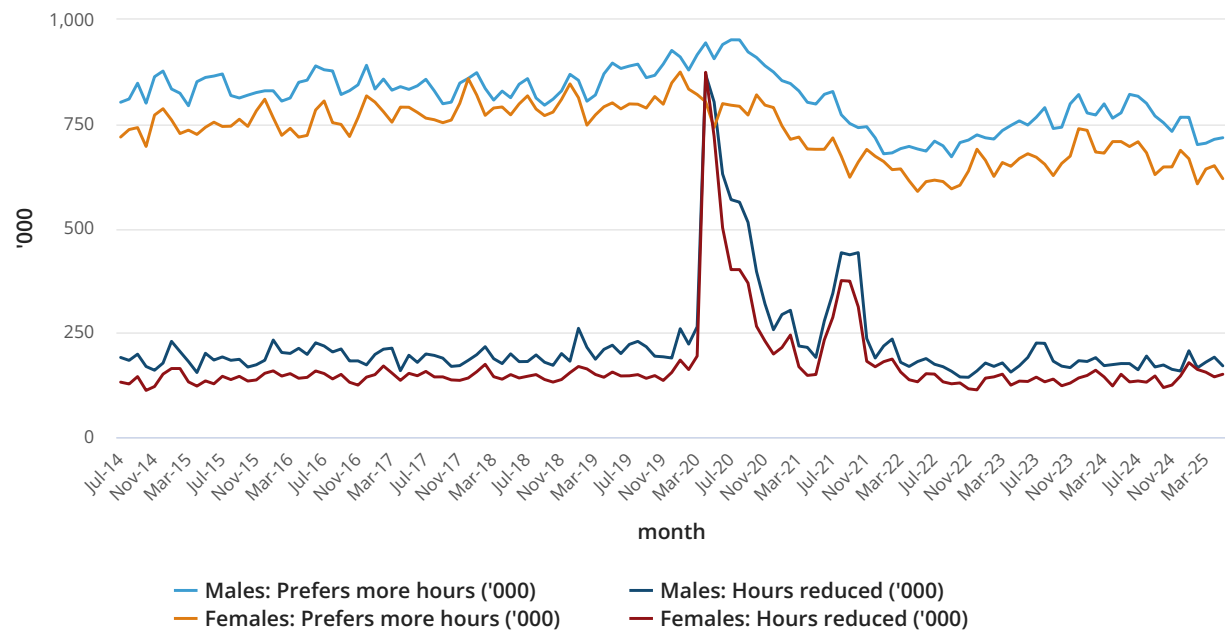
Chart 4: Underemployment ratio, Original



Note: The headcount underemployment ratio is the number of underemployed as a proportion of all employed. The hours-based underemployment ratio is the hours not worked as a proportion of the potential hours of employed people (i.e. the hours usually worked of all employed plus the additional hours preferred by the structurally underemployed).

Sex and Age

Chart 5: Underemployed workers, by Sex, Original



Note: There are people who preferred more hours and also had their hours reduced, that is, they worked less hours than usual, and also prefer to work more than their usual hours - so the sum of the people who preferred more hours and the people who had their hours reduced does not equal the total underemployed.

In May 2025, 10.4% of all employed people were underemployed (the underemployment ratio). Since July 2014 (the first month this expanded data are available for), employed women have generally been slightly more likely to be underemployed than men. However, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic the underemployment ratio has generally been higher for men.

Chart 6: Underemployment ratio, by Sex, Original

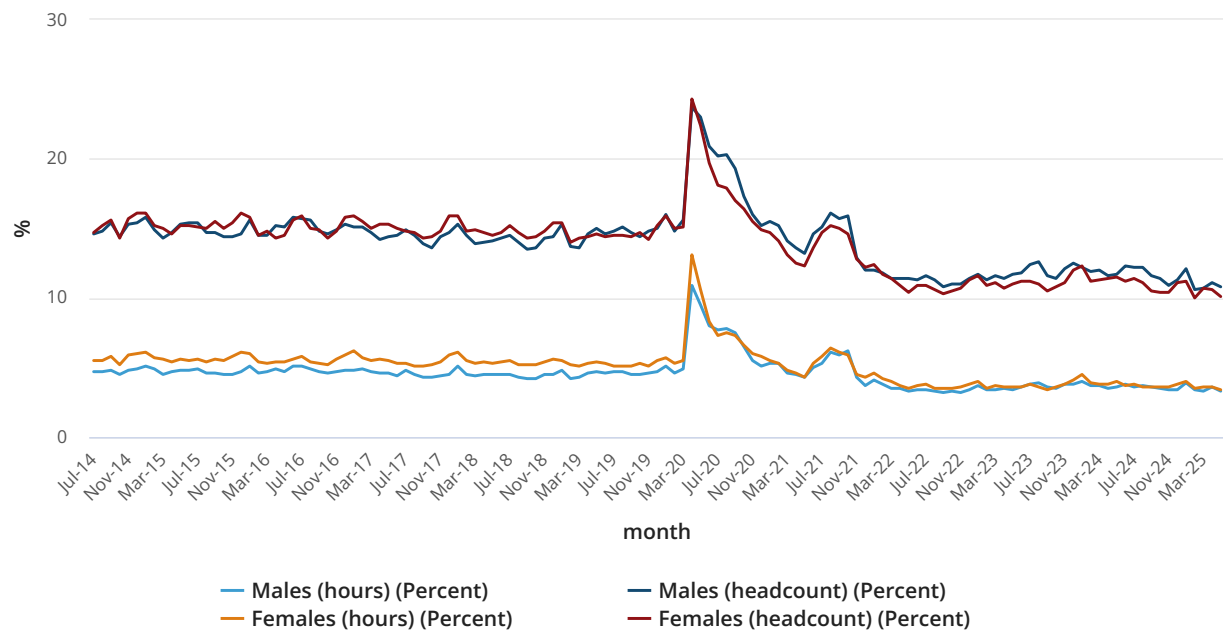
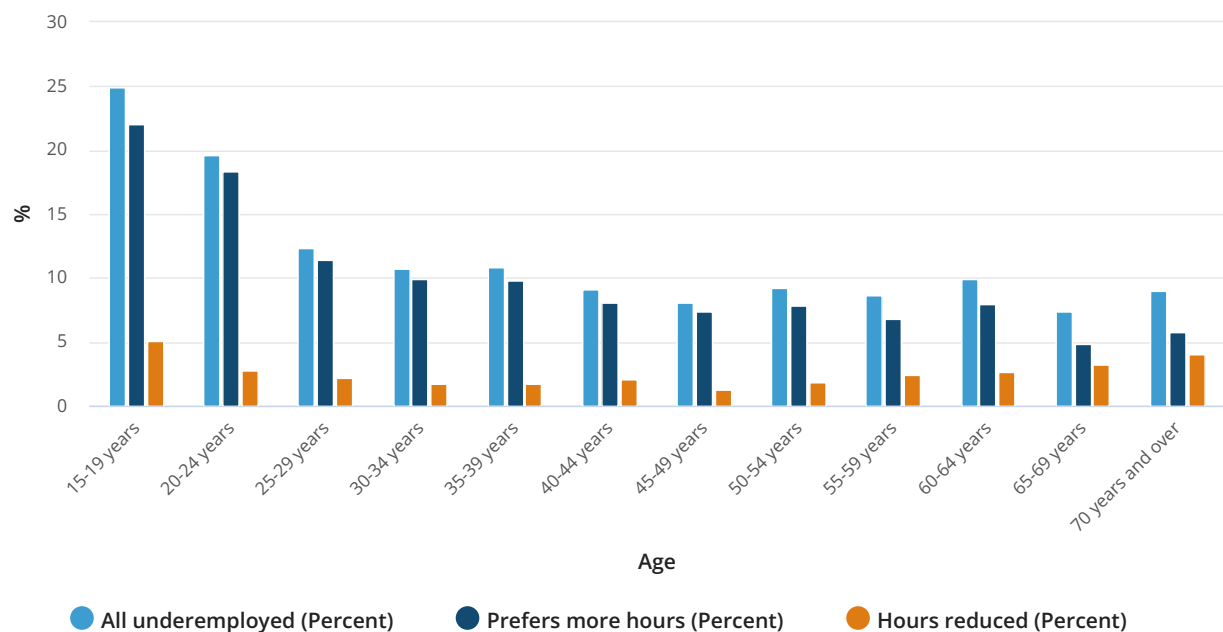


Chart 7: Underemployment ratio, by Age, May 2025, Original



Note: There are people who preferred more hours and also had their hours reduced, that is, they worked less hours than usual, and also prefer to work more than their usual hours - so the sum of the people who preferred more hours and the people who had their hours

reduced ratio does not equal the total underemployment ratio.

Full-time / part-time status

Chart 8 shows that in May 2025, there were 608,950 underemployed full-time workers and 926,200 underemployed part-time workers.

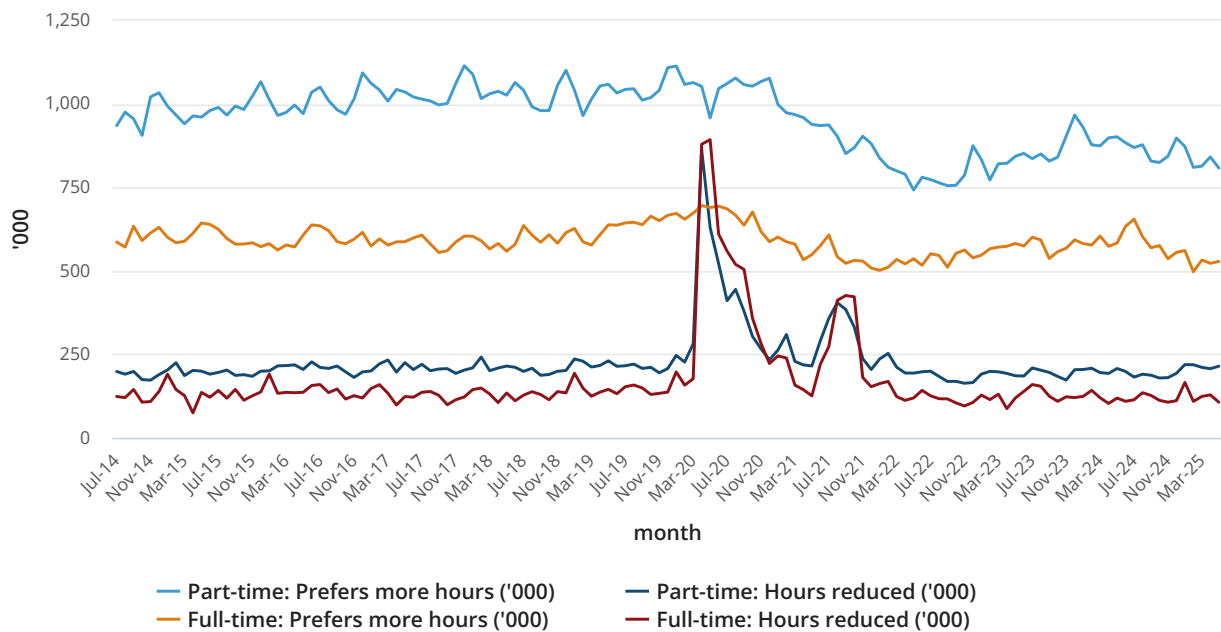
Of the underemployed full-time workers:

- 106,600 had their hours reduced
- 528,200 preferred more hours.

Amongst underemployed part-time workers:

- 214,500 had their hours reduced
- 808,100 preferred more hours.

Chart 8: Underemployed workers, by Full-time and part-time status, Original



Note: There are people who preferred more hours and also had their hours reduced, that is, they worked less hours than usual, and also prefer to work more than their usual hours - so the sum of the people who preferred more hours and the people who had their hours reduced does not equal the total underemployed.

Chart 9: Full-time and part-time underemployment ratio, by Sex, Original

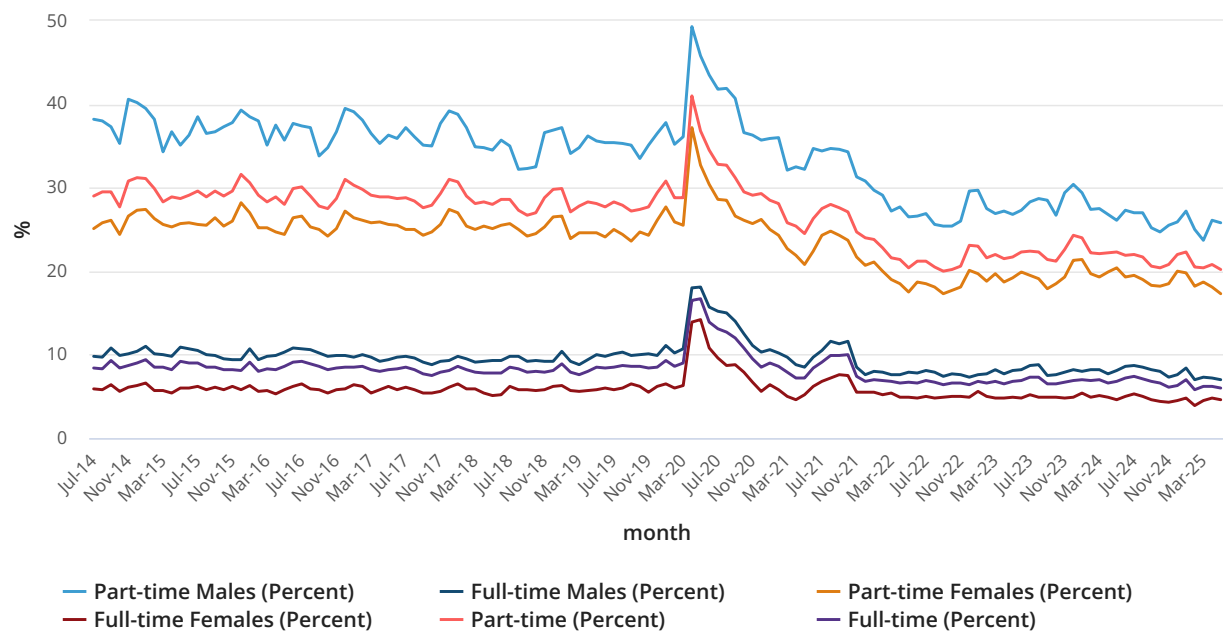
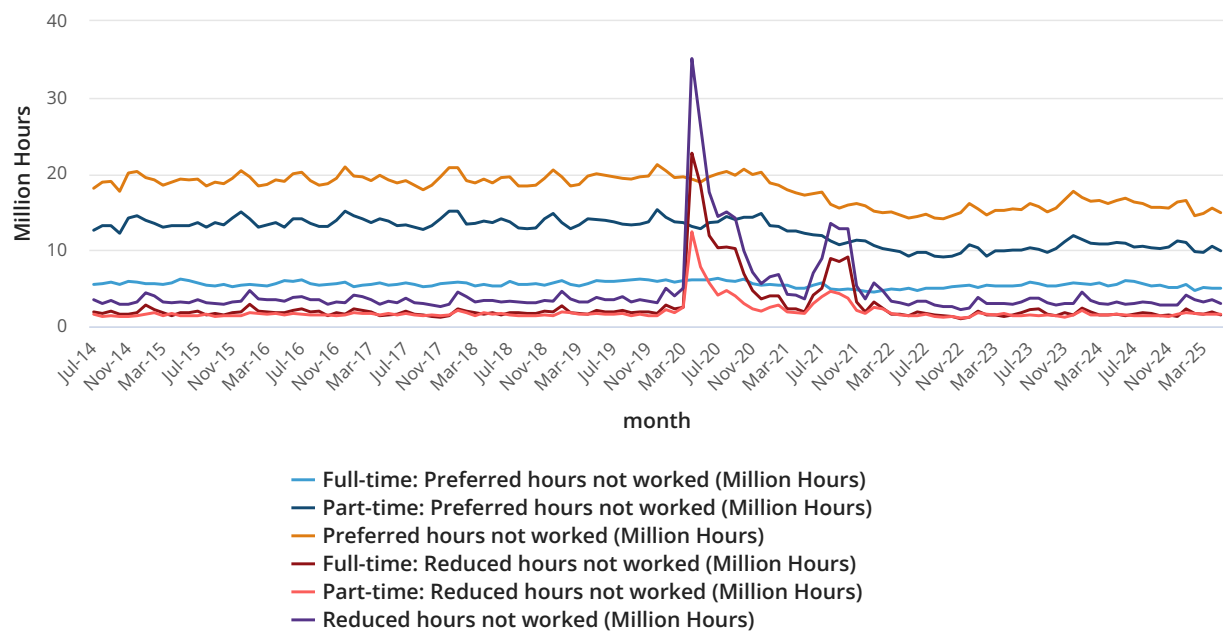


Chart 10: Weekly hours not worked, Underemployed workers, Original



Hours not worked by people who had their hours reduced is the difference between usual hours and the hours worked in the reference week, and the hours not worked by people who preferred more hours is the additional hours preferred.

Preferred hours

People who were underemployed in May 2025 because they preferred to work more hours than their usual hours, on average:

- usually worked 26 hours a week
- would have preferred to work an additional 11 hours a week.

People who were underemployed in May 2025 because they had their hours reduced for economic reasons, on average:

- actually worked 17 hours a week
- would have worked an additional 9.5 hours a week.

Chart 11: Prefers more hours, Average hours worked and additional hours preferred, May 2025, Original

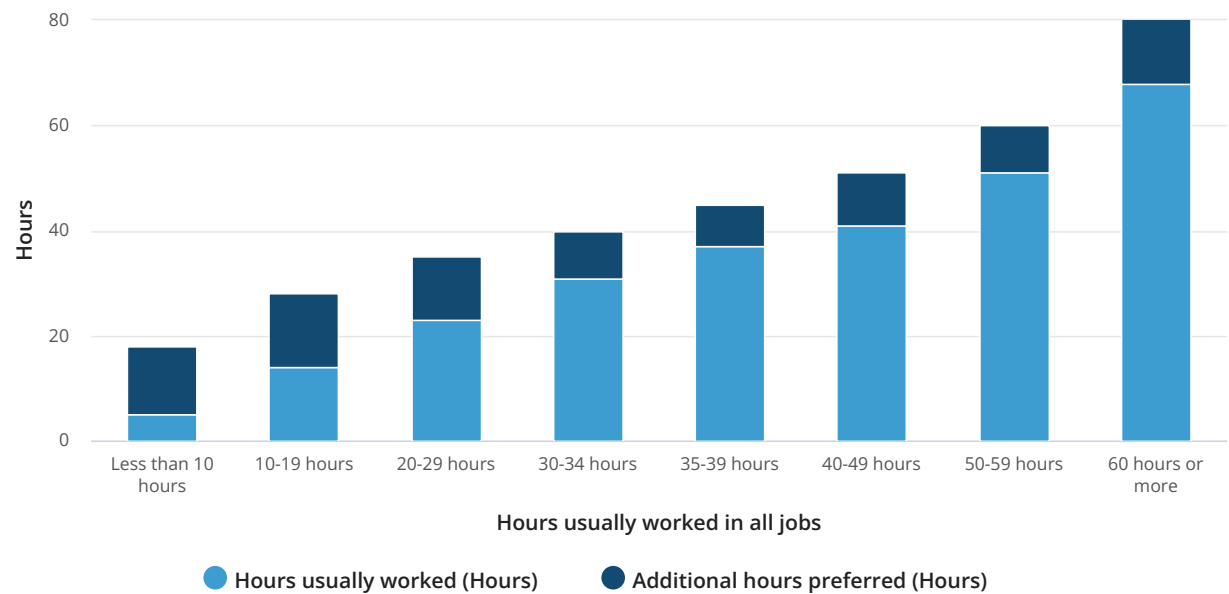
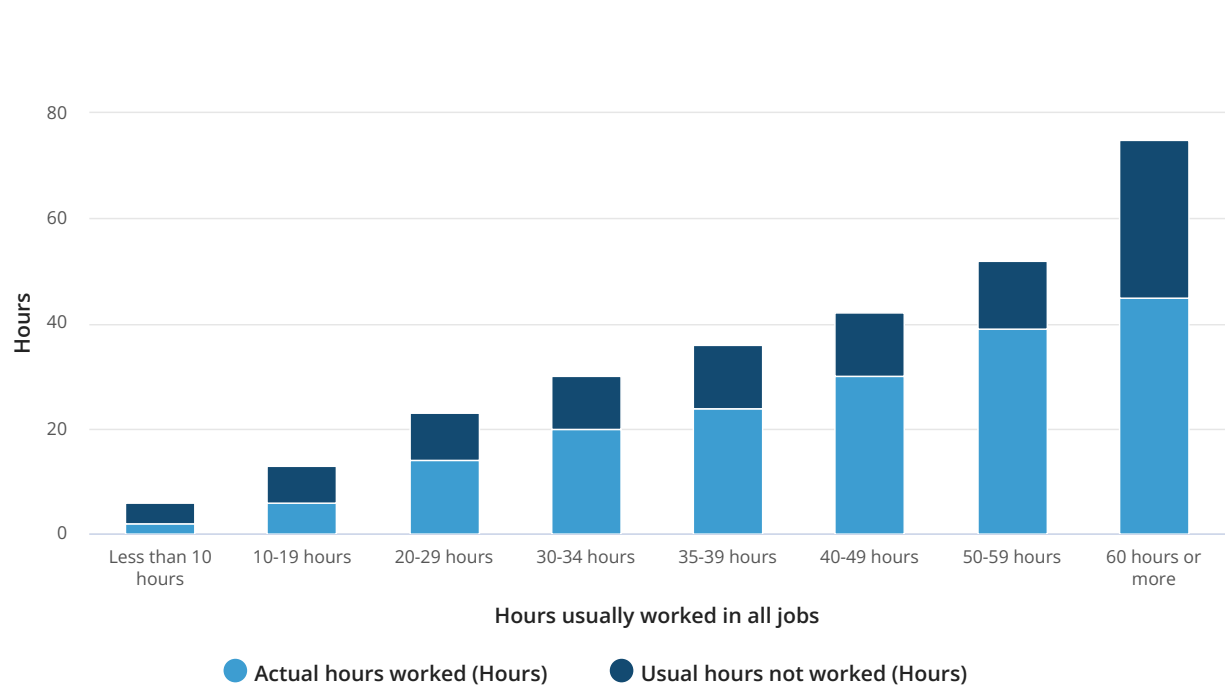
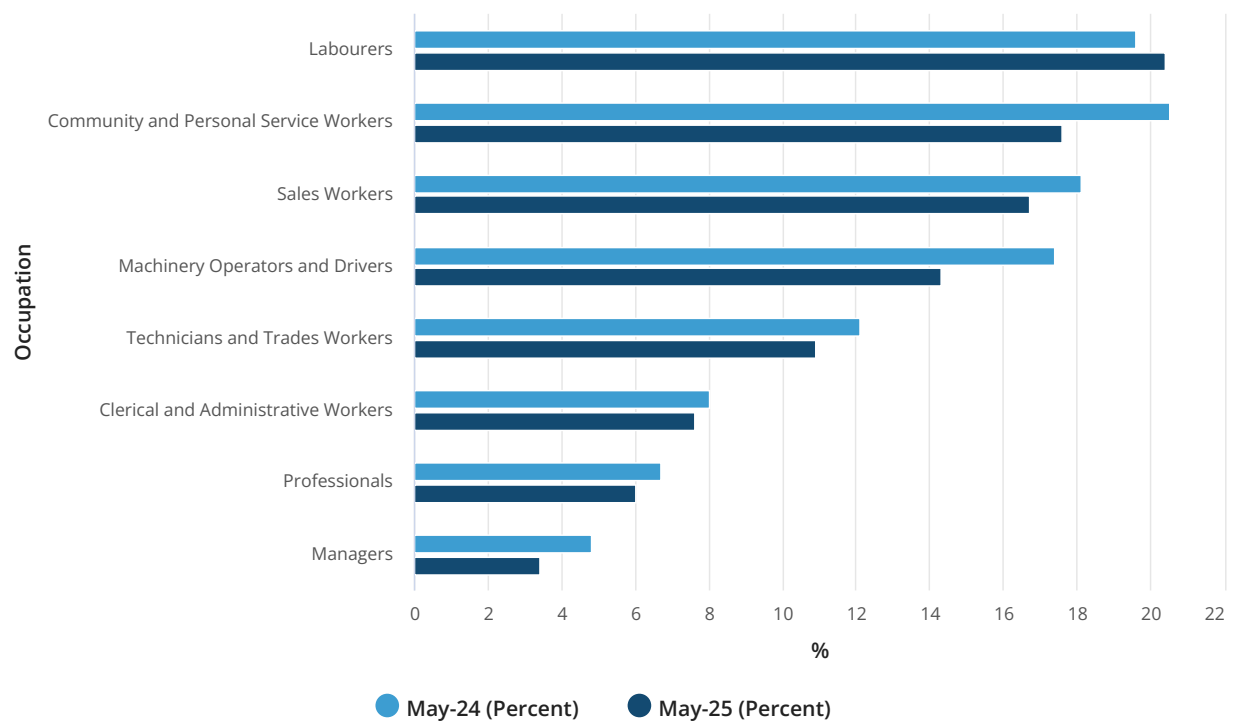


Chart 12: Hours reduced, Average hours worked and hours not worked, by Usual hours, May 2025, Original



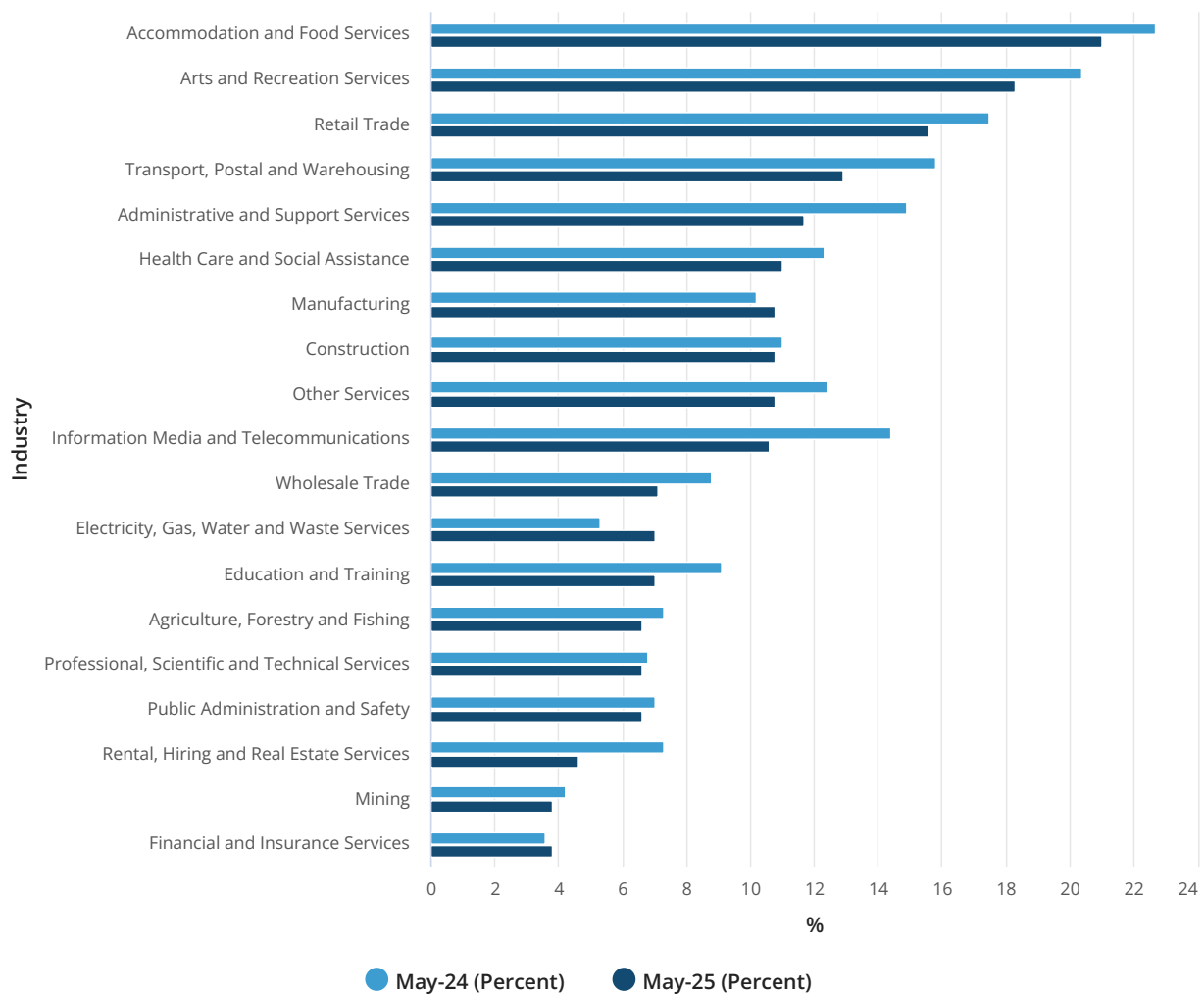
Occupation

Chart 13: Underemployment ratio, by Occupation, May 2025, Original



Industry

Chart 14: Underemployment ratio, by Industry, May 2025, Original

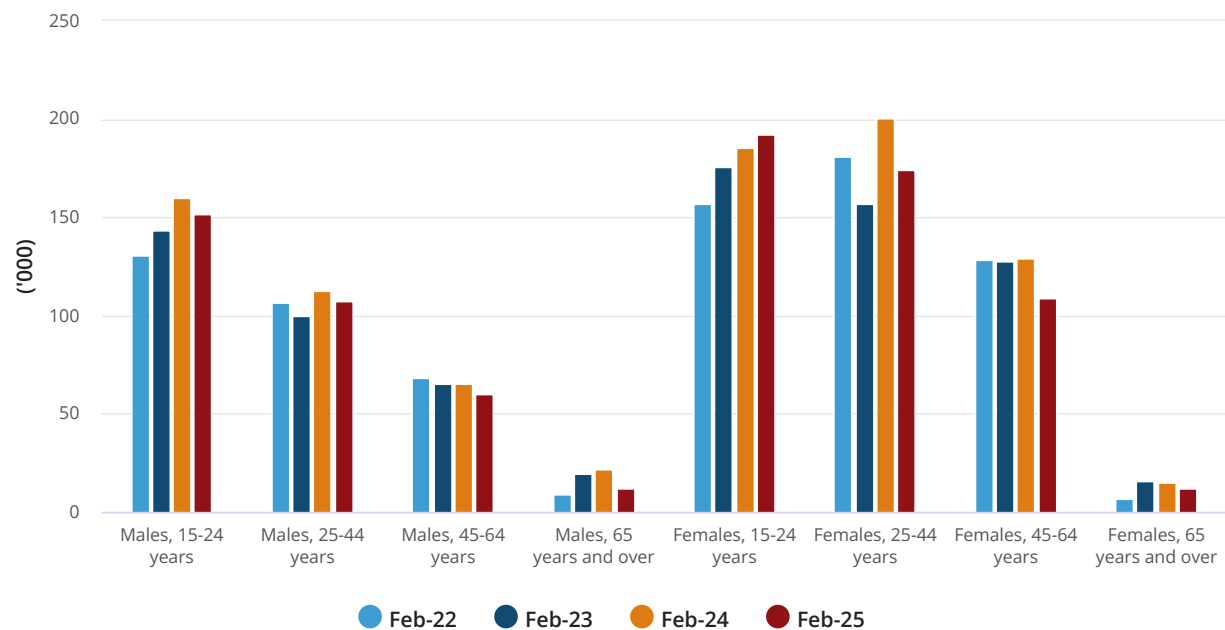


Part-time workers

In February 2025, there were 818,900 underemployed part-time workers who preferred to work more hours (19% of all part-time workers). This was a decrease of 70,100 from 889,000 underemployed part-time workers in February last year (which was 21% of all part-time workers).

- The number of male part-time workers decreased by 28,000 from 359,200 in February 2024 to 331,100 in February 2025.
- The number of female part-time workers decreased by 42,000 from 529,800 in February 2024 to 487,800 in February 2025.

Chart 15: Underemployed part-time workers by age and sex

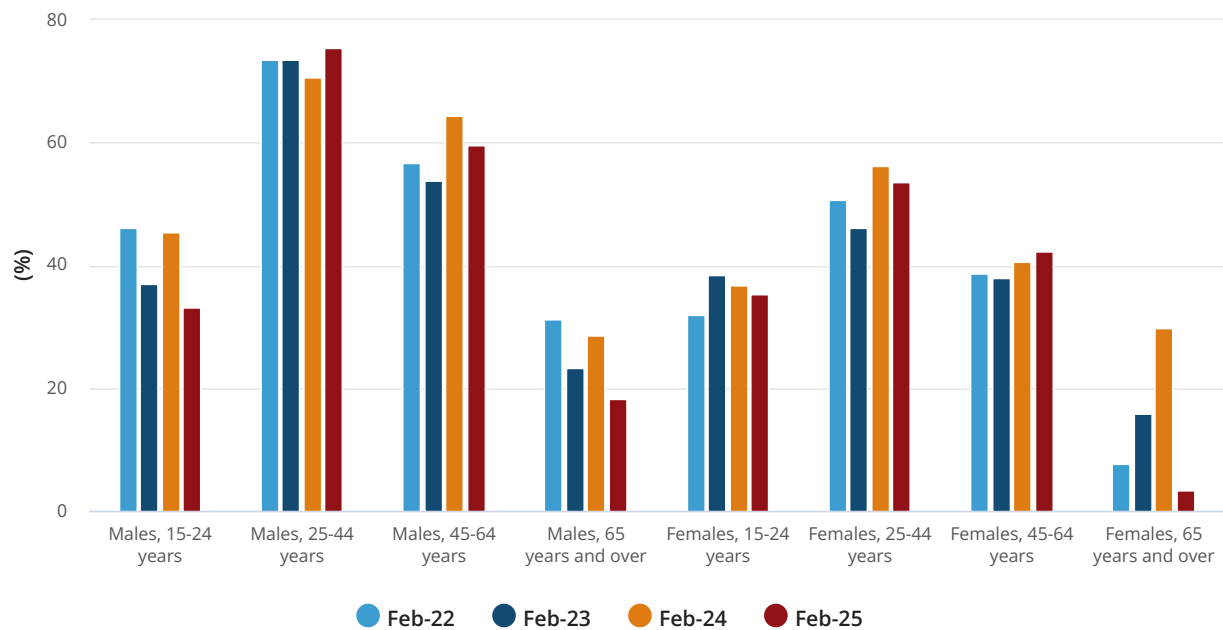


Extra hours preferred

In February 2025, just under half of the part-time workers who preferred more hours preferred to work full-time hours (46% or 377,100 underemployed part-time workers). The other half preferred to work more hours but remain working part-time (54%, or 441,800 underemployed part-time workers).

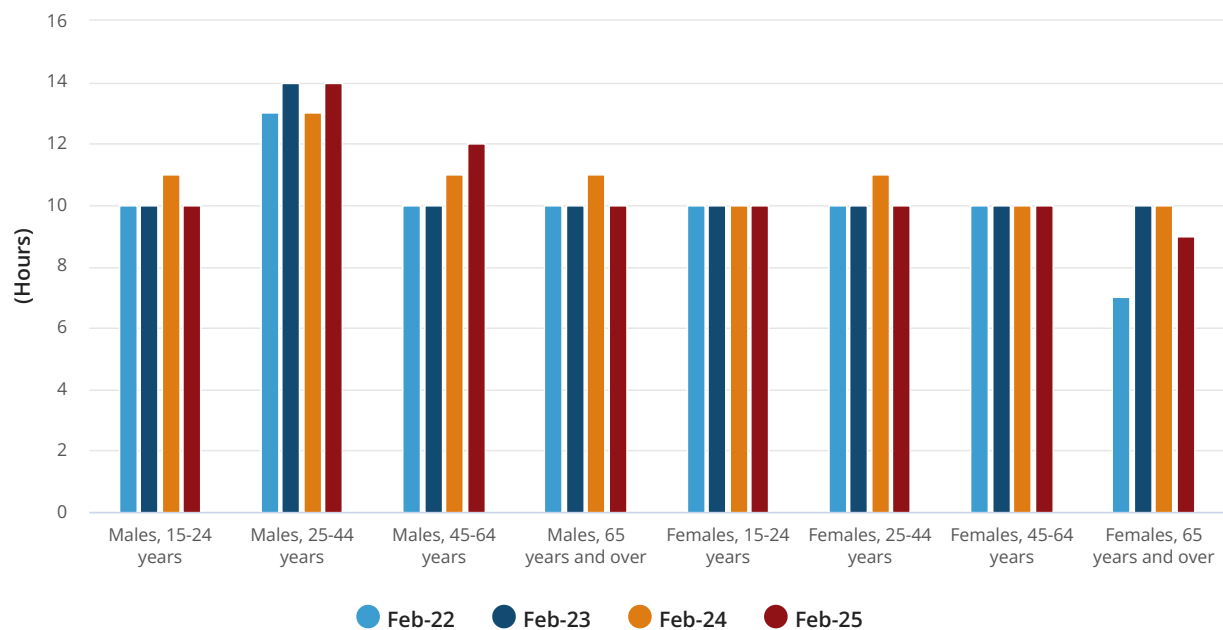
- Men aged 25-44 years were most likely to prefer to work full-time (76%).
- Women aged 65 years and over were least likely to prefer to work full-time (3%).

Chart 16: Underemployed part-time workers who would prefer to work full-time



In February 2025, half of the part-time workers who preferred more hours preferred an extra 10 hours or less (median extra hours preferred). Men aged 25-44 years preferred the most extra hours (14 hours per week).

Chart 17: Median extra hours preferred by age and sex

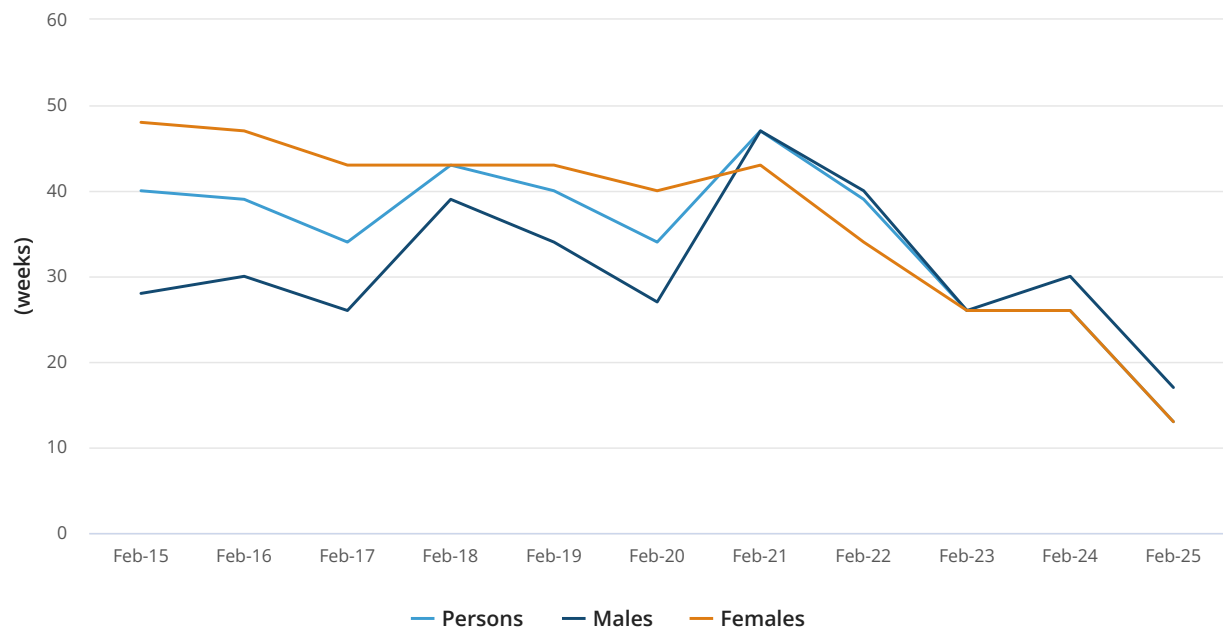


Duration of insufficient hours

In February 2025, 190,000 part-time workers who preferred more hours spent a year or more working in a job with insufficient hours (23% of all part-time workers who preferred more hours).

More than half (58%) of all part-time workers who prefer more hours worked with insufficient hours for 26 weeks or less (median duration of insufficient hours).

Chart 18: Median duration of insufficient hours



Looking for more work or more hours

In February 2025, of the 818,900 underemployed part-time workers, just under half (43%) took active steps to look for additional hours. The top three active steps taken to look for more hours were:

- Answered an ad for a job on the Internet, in a newspaper, etc. (20%)
- Wrote, phoned or applied in person to an employer (20%)
- Contacted friends or relatives (14%).

If a suitable job had been offered, 9% were prepared to move interstate, and 11% were prepared to move within their state or territory.

Just under half of underemployed part-time workers (48%) preferred not to change occupations in order to work more hours.

Data downloads

Underemployment

[Download all \(1.57 MB\)](#)

Table 1. Cyclical and structural underemployment of full-time and part-time workers

[Download XLSX](#)
[1.48 MB]

Table 2. Extended measures of underutilisation

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[218.42 KB]

Part-time underemployment

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Table 3. Underemployment status of full-time and part-time workers

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[225.85 KB]

Table 4. Part-time workers who prefer more hours

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[310.07 KB]

Table 5. Characteristics of part-time workers who prefer more hours

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Table 6. Duration of insufficient hours of underemployed part-time workers

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Table 7. Number of extra weekly hours preferred by underemployed part-time workers

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[1.92 MB]

Relative standard errors, Tables 2 to 7

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Previous catalogue number

This release uses ABS catalogue number 6229.0.

Methodology

[Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia methodology, February 2025](#)